

2006 Alcohol Awareness Month Plan

Purpose

Alcohol awareness month was designed to raise the general public's knowledge about: (1) the prevalence of early alcohol use and alcohol abuse as Vermont's greatest substance abuse problem; (2) strategies for reducing early use and abuse; (3) and community resources for prevention, treatment, recovery and enforcement.

Within the context of these broad objectives, a specific focus is selected each year.

The focus for this year's campaign is underage drinking.

Background

In 2004 the Institute of Medicine issued a report entitled, "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility". The report outlined the causes and consequences of youth alcohol use and recommended national, state and community-level actions to address the problem. The Surgeon General responded with a "call to action" and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) launched an underage drinking prevention initiative. As part of this initiative, SAMHSA will be awarding mini-grants to several community coalitions in Vermont to support town hall meetings on underage drinking.

We have made progress on underage drinking in Vermont. Alcohol use at least once in the last 30 days has decreased among 8th to 12th graders from 50% in 1997 to 39% in 2005, and binge drinking declined from 29% in 1999 to 21% in 2005. But there is still much to be done. Alcohol remains the most used drug by Vermont's teens and young adults. *This is important because those who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21.*

The focus for Alcohol Awareness Month in 2006 will be underage drinking, and the activities are designed to start a conversation with youth and adults on developing community-wide solutions.

Target Audience

- Primary Target – Parents and other adults who take care of youth.
- Secondary Target – Community leaders and policy-makers.

Strategies

1. Increase citizen involvement in prevention and early intervention efforts by holding at least 18 Town Hall Meetings during March and April to increase awareness and knowledge of:
 - Underage drinking and its consequences as a public health issue.
 - The social and cultural influences that promote alcohol use.
 - Community prevention, treatment and recovery resources available to youth and families.
2. Provide tools to help communities and parents address underage drinking.
3. Tap into existing National Alcohol Screening Day as a way to increase awareness about acceptable drinking guidelines for parents, especially as it pertains to being a role model for their children.

Tactics

- Governor's Proclamation.
- Town Hall Meetings on Underage Drinking to coincide with other states on or around March 28.
- Develop and distribute fact sheets for parents and caregivers.
- "Together We Can...Talk About Alcohol" community education activities
- Create a special section on the ADAP web site for resources and tools – Town Hall information, calendar of events, downloadable versions of fact sheets, links, etc.
- National Alcohol Awareness Month & Screening Day press release with AMA guidelines for adult alcohol use and alcohol screening resources.

Key Messages

- Underage drinking is a public health problem in Vermont -37% of 8th to 12th graders consumed at least one drink in the past thirty days, and 21% of 8th to 12th graders binge drank in the past thirty days.
- Youth who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21.
- Parents and guardians are important role models for children – studies indicate that parents can positively influence children's behavior by observing the rules of a moderate drinker or by not drinking.
- Comprehensive solutions, involving communities, families, youth and schools do work.
- Everyone can do something to help. Start talking before they start drinking.